Spiritual Instruction

OF

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

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FOREWORD TO THE ORIGINAL TAMIL VERSION

The Tamil-speaking world knows the life-history and the spiritual instructions of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi well through the books which have already come out. He shines in the resplendent Arunachala Hill (Tiruvannamalai) as the sun of knowledge which destroys the sorrows of those who worship him. In this book named Upadesa Manjari (bouquet of spiritual instructions) Sri Natanananda, a true devotee of his, who serves and praises him by laying at his lotus feet many garlands of songs, has brought out Bhagavan's words heard by him at different times. They consist of questions and answers comprising four chapters entitled *upadesa* (instruction), *abhyasa* (practice), *anubhava* (experience) and *arudha* (attainment). I humbly request devotees to accept this small book which offers wholesome food for the spirit.

VISWANATHAN
SRI RAMANASRAMAM
2-2-34

INVOCATION

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CHAPTER

I seek refuge at the sacred feet of the blessed Ramana, who performs the entire work of creation, preservation and destruction, while remaining wholly unattached, and who makes us aware of what is real and thus protects us, that I may set down his words fittingly.

IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK

Worshipping with the instruments (of thought, word and body) the sacred lotus feet of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the very embodiment of the beginningless infinite supreme Brahman, the *Satchitananda* (existence, consciousness, bliss), I have gathered this bouquet of the flowers of his instructions (*upadesamanjari*) for the benefit of those who are foremost among the seekers of Liberation and who are adored by learned persons, in order that they might adorn themselves with it and attain salvation.

This book is an epitome of the immortal words of that great soul, Sri Ramana Maharshi, whose teachings entirely dispelled the doubts and wrong notions of this humble person even as the sun dispels darkness.

The subject of this book is that eternal Brahman which shines as the pinnacle and heart of all the *Vedas* and *Agamas*.

That incomparable Self-realization (*atmasiddhi*) which is praised by all the Upanisads and which is the supreme good to be sought by all noble aspirants (*brahmavids*) is the theme of this work.

CHAPTER 1

INSTRUCTION

(*Upadesa*)

1. *What are the marks of a real teacher (Sadguru)*?

Steady abidance in the Self, looking at all with an equal eye, unshakeable courage at all times, in all places and circumstances, etc.

2. *What are the marks of an earnest disciple (sadsisya)*?

An intense longing for the removal of sorrow and attainment of joy and an intense aversion for all kinds of mundane pleasure.

3. *What are the characteristics of instruction (upadesa)*?

The word '*upadesa*' means : 'near the place or seat' (*upa* - near, *desa* - place or seat). The Guru who is the embodiment of that which is indicated by the terms *sat, chit,* and *ananda* (existence, consciousness and bliss), prevents the disciple who, on account of his acceptance of the forms of the objects of the senses, has swerved from his true state and is consequently distressed and buffeted by joys and sorrows, from continuing so and establishes him in his own real nature without differentiation.

Upadesa also means showing a distant object quite near. It is brought home to the disciple that the Brahman which he believes to be distant and different from himself is near and not different from himself.

4. *If it be true that the Guru is one's own Self (atman), what is the principle underlying the doctrine which says that, however learned a disciple may be or whatever occult powers he may possess, he cannot attain self-realization (atma-siddhi) without the grace of the Guru*?

Although in absolute truth the state of the *Guru* is that of oneself it is very hard for the Self which has become the individual soul (*jiva*) through ignorance to realize its true state or nature without the grace of the *Guru*.

All mental concepts are controlled by the mere presence of the real *Guru*. If he were to say to one who arrogantly claims that he has seen the further shore of the ocean of learning or one who claims arrogantly that he can perform deeds which are well-nigh impossible, "Yes, you learnt all that is to be learnt, but have you learnt (to know) yourself? And you who are capable of performing deeds which are almost impossible, have you seen yourself?", they will bow their heads (in shame) and remain silent. Thus it is evident that only by the grace of the *Guru* and by no other accomplishment is it possible to know oneself.

5. *What are the marks of the Guru's grace*?

It is beyond words or thoughts.

6. *If that is so, how is it that it is said that the disciple realizes his true state by the Guru's grace*?

It is like the elephant which wakes up on seeing a lion in its dream. Even as the elephant wakes up at the mere sight of the lion, so too is it certain that the disciple wakes up from the sleep of ignorance into the wakefulness of true knowledge through the *Guru's* benevolent look of grace.

7. *What is the significance of the saying that the nature of the real Guru is that of the Supreme Lord (Sarvesvara)*?

In the case of the individual soul which desires to attain the state of true knowledge or the state of Godhood (*Isvara*) and with that object always practises devotion, when the individual's devotion has reached a mature stage, the Lord who is the witness of that individual soul and identical with it, comes forth in human form with the help of *sat-chit-ananda*, His three natural features, and form and name which he also graciously assumes, and in the guise of blessing the disciple, absorbs him in Himself. According to this doctrine the *Guru* can truly be called the Lord.

8. *How then did some great persons attain knowledge without a Guru*?

To a few mature persons the Lord shines as the light of knowledge and imparts awareness of the truth.

9. *What is the end of devotion (bhakti) and the path of Siddhanta (i.e., Saiva Siddhanta)*?

It is to learn the truth that all one's actions performed with unselfish devotion, with the aid of the three purified instruments (body, speech and mind), in the capacity of the servant of the Lord, become the Lord's actions, and to stand forth free from the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. This is also the truth of what the *Saiva-Siddhantins* call *para-bhakti* (supreme devotion) or living in the service of God *(irai-pani-nittral)*.

10. *What is the end of the path of knowledge (jnana) or Vedanta*?

It is to know the truth that the 'I' is not different from the Lord (*Isvara*) and to be free from the feeling of being the doer *(kartrtva, ahamkara)*.

11. *How can it be said that the end of both these paths is the same*?

Whatever the means, the destruction of the sense 'I' and 'mine' is the goal, and as these are interdependent, the destruction of either of them causes the destruction of the other; therefore in order to achieve that state of Silence which is beyond thought and word, either the path of knowledge

which removes the sense of 'I' or the path of devotion which removes the sense of 'mine', will suffice. So there is no doubt that the end of the paths of devotion and knowledge is one and the same.

NOTE: So long as the 'I' exists it is necessary to accept the Lord also. If any one wishes to regain easily the supreme state of identity (*sayujya*) now lost to him, it is only proper that he should accept this conclusion.

12. *What is the mark of the ego*?

The individual soul of the form of 'I' is the ego The Self which is of the nature of intelligence (*chit*) has no sense of 'I'. Nor does the insentient body possess a sense of 'I'. The mysterious appearance of a delusive ego between the intelligent and the insentient, being the root cause of all these troubles, upon its destruction by whatever means, that which really exists will be seen as it is. This is called Liberation (*moksha*).

CHAPTER II

PRACTICE
(*Abhyasa*)

1. *What is the method of practice*?

As the Self of a person who tries to attain Self-realization is not different from him and as there is nothing other than or superior to him to be attained by him, Self-realization being only the realization of one's own nature, the seeker of Liberation realizes, without doubts or misconceptions, his real nature by distinguishing the eternal from the transient, and never swerves from his natural state. This is known as the practice of knowledge. This is the enquiry leading to Self-realization.

2. *Can this path of enquiry be followed by all aspirants*?

This is suitable only for the ripe souls. The rest should follow different methods according to the state of their minds.

3. *What are the other methods*?

They are (i) *stuti*, (ii) *japa*, (iii) *dhyana*, (iv) *yoga*,(v) *jnana*, etc.

(i) *stuti* is singing the praises of the Lord with a great feeling of devotion.

(ii) *japa* is uttering the names of the gods or sacred *mantras* like *Om* either mentally or verbally.(While following the methods of *stuti* and *japa* the mind will sometimes be concentrated (*lit*. closed) and sometimes diffused (*lit*. open). The vagaries of the mind will not be evident to those who follow these methods).

(iii) *dhyana* denotes the repetition of the names, etc., mentally (*japa*) with feelings of devotion. In this method the state of the mind will be understood easily. For the mind does not become

concentrated and diffused simultaneously. When one is in *dhyana* it does not contact the objects of the senses, and when it is in contact with the objects it is not in *dhyana*. Therefore those who are in this state can observe the vagaries of the mind then and there and by stopping the mind from thinking other thoughts, fix it in *dhyana*. Perfection in *dhyana* is the state of abiding in the Self (*lit.*, abiding in the form of 'that' *tadakaranilai*) .

As meditation functions in an exceedingly subtle manner at the source of the mind it is not difficult to perceive its rise and subsidence.

(iv) *yoga*: The source of the breath is the same as that of the mind; therefore the subsidence of either leads effortlessly to that of the other. The practice of stilling the mind through breath control (*pranayama*) is called yoga.

Fixing their minds on psychic centres such as the *sahasrara* (*lit.* the thousand-petalled lotus) yogis remain any length of time without awareness of their bodies. As long as this state continues they appear to be immersed in some kind of joy. But when the mind which has become tranquil emerges (becomes active again) it resumes its worldly thoughts. It is therefore necessary to train it with the help of practices like *dhyana*, whenever it becomes externalised. It will then attain a state in which there is neither subsidence nor emergence.

(v) *jnana* is the annihilation of the mind in which it is made to assume the form of the Self through the constant practice of *dhyana* or enquiry (*vichara*). The extinction of the mind is the state in which there is a cessation of all efforts. Those who are established in this state never swerve from their true state. The terms 'silence' (*mouna*) and inaction refer to this state alone.

NOTE: (1) All practices are followed only with the object of concentrating the mind. As all the mental activities like remembering, forgetting, desiring, hating, attracting, discarding, etc., are modifications of the mind, they cannot be one's true state. Simple, changeless being is one's true nature. Therefore to know the truth of one's being and to be it, is known as release from bondage and the destruction of the knot (*granthi nasam*). Until this state of tranquillity of mind is firmly attained, the practice of unswerving abidance in the Self and keeping the mind unsoiled by various thoughts, is essential for an aspirant.

(2) Although the practices for achieving strength of mind are numerous, all of them achieve the same end. For it can be seen that whoever concentrates his mind on any object, will, on the cessation of all mental concepts, ultimately remain merely as that object. This is called successful meditation (*dhyana siddhi*). Those who follow the path of enquiry realize that the mind which remains at the end of the enquiry is Brahman. Those who practise meditation realize that the mind which remains at the end of the meditation is the object of their meditation. As the result is the same in either case it is the duty of aspirants to practise continuously either of these methods till the goal is reached.

4. *Is the state of 'being still' a state involving effort or effortless*?

It is not an effortless state of indolence. All mundane activities which are ordinarily called effort are performed with the aid of a portion of the mind and with frequent breaks. But the act of communion with the Self (*atma vyavahara*) or remaining still inwardly is intense activity which is performed with the entire mind and without break.

Maya (delusion or ignorance) which cannot be destroyed by any other act is completely destroyed by this intense activity which is called 'silence' (*mouna*).

5. *What is the nature of maya*?

Maya is that which makes us regard as non-existent the Self, the Reality, which is always and everywhere present, all-pervasive and self-luminous, and as existent the individual soul (*jiva*), the world (*jagat*), and God (*para*) which have been conclusively proved to be non-existent at all times and places.

6. *As the Self shines fully of its own accord why is it not generally recognised like the other objects of the world by all persons*?

Wherever particular objects are known it is the Self which has known itself in the form of those objects. For what is known as knowledge or awareness is only the patency of the Self (*atma sakti*). The Self is the only sentient object. There is nothing apart from the Self. If there are such objects they are all insentient and therefore cannot either know themselves or mutually know one another. It is because the Self does not know its true nature in this manner that it seems to be immersed and struggling in the ocean of birth (and death) in the form of the individual soul.

7. *Although the Lord is all-pervasive it appears, from passages like "adorning him through His Grace", that He can be known only through His grace. How then can the individual soul by its own efforts attain self-realization in he absence of the Lord's Grace*?

As the Lord denotes the Self and as Grace means the Lord's presence or revelation, there is no time when the Lord remains unknown. If the light of the sun is invisible to the owl it is only the fault of that bird and not of the sun. Similarly can the unawareness by ignorant persons of the Self which is always of the nature of awareness be other than their own fault? How can it be the fault of the Self? It is because Grace is of the very nature of the Lord that He is well-known as 'the blessed Grace'. Therefore the Lord, whose nature itself is Grace, does not have to bestow His Grace. Nor is there any particular time for bestowing His Grace.

8. *What part of the body is the abode of the Self*?

The heart on the right side of the chest is generally indicated. This is because we usually point to the right side of the chest when we refer to ourselves. Some say that the *sahasrara* (the thousand-petalled lotus) is the abode of the Self. But if that were true the head should not fall forward when we go to sleep or faint.

9. *What is the nature of the heart*?

The sacred texts describing it say:

Between the two nipples, below the chest and above the abdomen, there are six organs of different colours[1]. One of them resembling the bud of a water lily and situated two digits to the right is the

heart. It is inverted and within it is a tiny orifice which is the seat of dense darkness (ignorance) full of desires. All the psychic nerves (*nadis*) depend upon it. It is the abode of the vital forces, the mind and the light (of consciousness). (*See Appendix to Reality in Forty Verses 18 -19*).

1. These are not the same as the Chakras.

But, although it is described thus, the meaning of the word heart (*hrdayam*) is the Self (*atman*). As it is denoted by the terms existence, consciousness, bliss, eternal and plenum (*sat, chit, anandam, nityam, purnam*) it has no differences such as exterior and interior or up and down. That tranquil state in which all thoughts come to an end is called the state of the Self. When it is realized as it is, there is no scope for discussions about its location inside the body or outside.

10. *Why do thoughts of many objects arise in the mind even when there is no contact with external objects*?

All such thoughts are due to latent tendencies (*purva samskaras*). They appear only to the individual consciousness (*jiva*) which has forgotten its real nature and become externalised. Whenever particular things are perceived, the enquiry "Who is it that sees them"? should be made; they will then disappear at once.

11. *How do the triple factors (i.e., knower, known and knowledge), which are absent in deep sleep, samadhi, etc., manifest themselves in the Self (in the states of waking and dreaming)*?

From the Self there arise in succession

(i) *Chidabhasa* (reflected consciousness) which is a kind of luminosity.

(ii) *Jiva* (the individual consciousness) or the seer or the first concept.

(iii) Phenomena, that is the world.

12. *Since the Self is free from the notions of knowledge and ignorance how can it be said to pervade the entire body in the shape of sentience or to impart sentience to the senses*?

Wise men say that there is a connection between the source of the various psychic nerves and the Self, that this is the knot of the heart, that the connection between the sentient and the insentient will exist until this is cut asunder with the aid of true knowledge, that just as the subtle and invisible force of electricity travels through wires and does many wonderful things, so the force of the Self also travels through the psychic nerves and, pervading the entire body, imparts sentience to the senses, and that if this knot is cut the Self will remain as it always is, without any attributes.

13. *How can there be a connection between the Self which is pure knowledge and the triple factors which are relative knowledge*?

This is, in a way, like the working of a cinema as shown below:-

CINEMA SHOW	SELF
1/ The lamp inside (the apparatus)	1/ The Self
2/ The lens in front of the lamp	2/ The pure (sattvic) mind close to the Self.
3/ The film which is a long series of (separate photos).	3/ The stream of latent tendencies consisting of subtle thoughts.
4/ The lens, the light passing through it and the lamp, which together form the focused light.	4/ The mind, the illumination of it and the Self, which together form the seer or the Jiva.
5/ The light passing through the lens and falling on the screen.	5/ The light of the Self emerging from the mind through the senses, and falling on the world.
6/ The various kinds of pictures appearing in the light of the screen.	6/ The various forms and names appearing as the objects perceived in the light of the world.
7/ The mechanism which sets the film in motion.	7/ The divine law manifesting the latent tendencies of the mind.

Just as the pictures appear on the screen as long as the film throws the shadows through the lens, so the phenomenal world will continue to appear to the individual in the waking and dream states as long as there are latent mental impressions. Just as the lens magnifies the tiny specks on the film to a huge size and as a number of pictures are shown in a second, so the mind enlarges the sprout-like tendencies into tree-like thoughts and shows in a second innumerable worlds. Again, just as there is only the light of the lamp visible when there is no film, so the Self alone shines without the triple factors when the mental concepts in the form of tendencies are absent in the states of deep sleep, swoon and samadhi. Just as the lamp illumines the lens, etc., while remaining unaffected, the Self illumines the ego (*chidabhasa*), etc., while remaining unaffected.

14. *What is dhyana (meditation)*?

It is abiding as one's Self without swerving in any way from one's real nature and without feeling that one is meditating. As one is not in the least conscious of the different states (waking, dreaming, etc.) in this condition, the sleep (noticeable) here is also regarded as *dhyana*.

15. *What is the difference between dhyana and samadhi*?

Dhyana is achieved through deliberate mental effort; in *samadhi* there is no such effort.

16. *What are the factors to be kept in view in dhyana* ?

It is important for one who is established in his Self (*atma nista*) to see that he does not swerve in the least from this absorption. By swerving from his true nature he may see before him bright effulgences, etc., or hear (unusual) sounds or regard as real the visions of gods appearing within or outside himself. He should not be deceived by these and forget himself.

NOTE: (i) If the moments that are wasted in thinking of the objects which are not the Self, are spent on enquiry into the Self, Self-Realization will be attained in a very short time.

(ii) Until the mind becomes established in itself some kind of *bhavana* (contemplation of a personified god or goddess with deep emotion and religious feeling) is essential. Otherwise the mind will be frequently assailed by wayward thoughts or sleep.

(iii) Without spending all the time in practising *bhavanas* like 'I am Siva' or 'I am Brahman', which are regarded as *nirgunopasana* (contemplation of the attributeless Brahman), the method of enquiry into oneself should be practised as soon as the mental strength which is the result of such *upasana* (contemplation) is attained.

(iv) The excellence of the practice (*sadhana*) lies in not giving room for even a single mental concept (*vritti*)

17. *What are the rules of conduct which an aspirant (sadhaka) should follow*?

Moderation in food, moderation in sleep and moderation in speech.

18. *How long should one practice*?

Until the mind attains effortlessly its natural state of freedom from concepts, that is till the sense of 'I' and 'mine' exists no longer.

19. *What is the meaning of dwelling in solitude (ekanta vasa)*?

As the Self is all-pervasive it has no particular place for solitude. The state of being free from mental concepts is called 'dwelling in solitude'.

20. *What is the sign of wisdom (viveka)*?

Its beauty lies in remaining free from delusion after realising the truth once. There is fear only for one who sees at least a slight difference in the Supreme Brahman. So long as there is the idea that the body is the Self one cannot be a realizer of truth whoever he might be.

21. *If everything happens according to karma (prarabdha: the result of one's acts in the past) how is one to overcome the obstacles to meditation (dhyana)*?

Prarabdha concerns only the out-turned, not the in-turned mind. One who seeks his real Self will not be afraid of any obstacle.

22. *Is asceticism (sanyasa) one of the essential requisites for a person to become established in the Self (atma nista)*?

The effort that is made to get rid of attachment to one's body is really towards abiding in the Self. Maturity of thought and enquiry alone removes attachment to the body, not the stations of life (*asramas*), such as student (*brahmachari*), etc. For the attachment is in the mind while the stations pertain to the body. How can bodily stations remove the attachment in the mind? As maturity of thought and enquiry pertain to the mind these alone can, by enquiry on the part of the same mind, remove the attachments which have crept into it through thoughtlessness. But, as the discipline of asceticism (*sanyasasrama*) is the means for attaining dispassion (*vairagya*), and as dispassion is the means for enquiry, joining an order of ascetics may be regarded, in a way, as a means of enquiry through dispassion. Instead of wasting one's life by entering the order of ascetics before one is fit for it, it is better to live the householder's life. In order to fix the mind in the Self which

is its true nature it is necessary to separate it from the family of fancies (*samkalpas*) and doubts (*vikalpas*), that is to renounce the family (*samsara*) in the mind. This is the real asceticism.

23. *It is an established rule that so long as there is the least idea of I-am-the-doer, Self-knowledge cannot be attained, but is it possible for an aspirant who is a householder to discharge his duties properly without this sense*?

As there is no rule that action should depend upon a sense of being the doer it is unnecessary to doubt whether any action will take place without a doer or an act of doing. Although the officer of a government treasury may appear, in the eyes of others, to be doing his duty attentively and responsibly all day long, he will be discharging his duties without attachment, thinking 'I have no real connection with all this money' and without a sense of involvement in his mind. In the same manner a wise householder may also discharge without attachment the various household duties which fall to his lot according to his past karma, like a tool in the hands of another. Action and knowledge are not obstacles to each other.

24. *Of what use to his family is a wise householder who is unmindful of his bodily comforts and of what use is his family to him*?

Although he is entirely unmindful of his bodily comforts, if, owing to his past karma, his family have to subsist by his efforts, he may be regarded as doing service to others. If it is asked whether the wise man derives any benefit from the discharge of domestic duties, it may be answered that, as he has already attained the state of complete satisfaction which is the sum total of all benefits and the highest good of all, he does not stand to gain anything more by discharging family duties.

25. *How can cessation of activity (nivritti) and peace of mind be attained in the midst of household duties which are of the nature of constant activity*?

As the activities of the wise man exist only in the eyes of others and not in his own, although he may be accomplishing immense tasks, he really does nothing. Therefore his activities do not stand in the way of inaction and peace of mind. For he knows the truth that all activities take place in his mere presence and that he does nothing. Hence he will remain as the silent witness of all the activities taking place.

26. *Just as the Sage's past karma is the cause of his present activities will not the impressions (vasanas) caused by his present activities adhere to him in future*?

Only one who is free from all the latent tendencies (*vasanas*) is a Sage. That being so how can the tendencies of karma affect him who is entirely unattached to activity?

27. *What is the meaning of brahmacharya*?

Only enquiry into Brahman should be called brahmacharya.

28. *Will the practice of brahmacharya which is followed in conformity with the (four) orders of life (asramas) be a means of knowledge*?

As the various means of knowledge, such as control of senses, etc., are included in *brahmacharya* the virtuous practices duly followed by those who belong to the order of students (*brahmacharins*) are very helpful for their improvement.

29. *Can one enter the order of ascetics (sanyasa) directly from the order of students (brahmacharya)*?

Those who are competent need not formally enter the orders of *brahmacharya*, etc., in the order laid down. One who has realized his Self does not distinguish between the various orders of life. Therefore no order of life either helps or hinders him.

30. *Does an aspirant (sadhaka) lose anything by not observing the rules of caste and orders of life*?

As the attainment (*anusthana, lit.* practice) of knowledge is the supreme end of all other practices, there is no rule that one who remains in any one order of life and constantly acquires knowledge is bound to follow the rules laid down for that order of life. If he follows the rules of caste and orders of life he does so for the good of the world. He does not derive any benefit by observing the rules. Nor does he lose anything by not observing them.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIENCE
(*Anubhava*)

1. *What is the light of consciousness*?

It is the self-luminous existence-consciousness which reveals to the seer the world of names and forms both inside and outside. The existence of this existence-consciousness can be inferred by the objects illuminated by it. It does not become the object of consciousness.

2. *What is knowledge* (*vijnana*)?

It is that tranquil state of existence-consciousness which is experienced by the aspirant and which is like the waveless ocean or the motionless ether.

3. *What is bliss*?

It is the experience of joy (or peace) in the state of *vijnana* free of all activities and similar to deep sleep. This is also called the state of *kevala nirvikalpa* (remaining without concepts).

4. *What is the state beyond bliss*?

It is the state of unceasing peace of mind which is found in the state of absolute quiescence, *jagrat-sushupti* (*lit.* sleep with awareness) which resembles inactive deep sleep. In this state, in spite of the activity of the body and the senses, there is no external awareness, like a child immersed in sleep[1] (who is not conscious of the food given to him by his mother). A yogi who is in this state is inactive even while engaged in activity. This is also called *sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi* (natural state of absorption in oneself without concepts).

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1. The acts of sleeping children like eating and drinking are acts only in the eyes of others and not in their own. They do not therefore really do those acts in spite of their appearing to do them.

5. *What is the authority for saying that the entire moving and unmoving worlds depend upon oneself*?

The Self means the embodied being. It is only after the energy, which was latent in the state of deep sleep, emerges with the idea of 'I' that all objects are experienced. The Self is present in all perceptions as the perceiver. There are no objects to be seen when the 'I' is absent. For all these reasons it may undoubtedly be said that everything comes out of the Self and goes back to the Self.

6. *As the bodies and the selves animating them are everywhere actually observed to be innumerable how can it be said that the Self is only one*?

If the idea 'I am the body' is accepted[1], the selves are multiple. The state in which this idea vanishes is the Self since in that state there are no other objects. It is for this reason that the Self is regarded as one only.

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1. The idea that one is one's body is what is called hrdaya-granthi (knot of the heart). Of the various knots this knot, which binds together what is conscious with what is insentient, is what causes bondage.

7. *What is the authority for saying that Brahman can be apprehended by the mind and at the same time that it cannot be apprehended by the mind*?

It cannot be apprehended by the impure mind but can be apprehended by the pure mind.

8. *What is pure mind and what is impure mind*?

When the indefinable power of Brahman separates itself from Brahman and, in union with the reflection of consciousness (*chidabhasa*) assumes various forms, it is called the impure mind. When it becomes free from the reflection of consciousness (*abhasa*), through discrimination, it is called the pure mind. Its state of union with the Brahman is its apprehension of Brahman. The energy which is accompanied by the reflection of consciousness is called the impure mind and its state of separation from Brahman is its non-apprehension of Brahman.

9. *Is it possible to overcome, even while the body exists, the karma (prarabdha) which is said to last till the end of the body*?

Yes. If the agent (doer) upon whom the karma depends, namely the ego, which has come into existence between the body and the Self, merges in its source and loses its form, will the karma which depends upon it alone survive? Therefore when there is no 'I' there is no karma.

10. *As the Self is existence and consciousness, what is the reason for describing it as different from the existent and the non-existent, the sentient and the insentient*?

Although the Self is real, as it comprises everything, it does not give room for questions involving duality about its reality or unreality. Therefore it is said to be different from the real and the unreal. Similarly, even though it is consciousness, since there is nothing for it to know or to make itself known to, it is said to be different from the sentient and the insentient.

CHAPTER IV

ATTAINMENT
(*Arudha*)

1. *What is the state of attainment of knowledge*?

It is firm and effortless abidance in the Self in which the mind which has become one with the Self does not subsequently emerge again at any time. That is, just as everyone usually and naturally has the idea, 'I am not a goat nor a cow nor any other animal but a man', when he thinks of his body, so also when he has the idea 'I am not the principles (*tatwas*) beginning with the body and ending with sound (*nada*), but the Self which is existence, consciousness and bliss', the innate self-consciousness (*atmaprajna*), he is said to have attained firm knowledge.

2. *To which of the seven stages of knowledge (jnana-bhoomikas)* does the sage (jnani) belong*?

He belongs to the fourth stage.

3. *If that is so why have three more stages superior to it been distinguished*?

The marks of the stages four to seven are based upon the experiences of the realized person (*jivanmukta*). They are not states of knowledge and release. So far as knowledge and release are concerned no distinction whatever is made in these four stages.

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* The seven *jnana bhoomikas* are:-
1. *subheccha* (the desire for enlightenment).
2. *vicharana* (enquiry).
3. *tanumanasa* (tenuous mind).
4. *satwapatti* (self-realization).
5. *asamsakti* (non-attachment).

6. *padarthabhavana* (non-perception of objects).
7. *turyaga* (transcendence).

Those who have attained the last four *bhoomikas* are called *brahmavit, brahmavidvara, brahmavidvariya* and *brahmavid varistha* respectively.

4. *As liberation is common to all, why is the varistha (lit. the most excellent) alone praised excessively*?

So far as the varistha's common experience of bliss is concerned he is extolled only because of the special merit acquired by him in his previous births which is the cause of it.

5. *As there is no one who does not desire to experience constant bliss what is the reason why all sages (jnanis) do not attain the state of varistha*?

It is not to be attained by mere desire or effort. Karma (*prarabdha*) is its cause. As the ego dies along with its cause even in the fourth stage (*bhoomika*), what agent is there beyond that stage to desire anything or to make efforts? So long as they make efforts they will not be sages (*jnanis*) . Do the sacred texts (*srutis*) which specially mention the *varistha* say that the other three are unenlightened persons?

6. *As some sacred texts say that the supreme state is that in which the sense organs and the mind are completely destroyed, how can that state be compatible with the experience of the body and the senses*?

If that were so there would not be any difference between that state and the state of deep sleep. Further how can it be said to be the natural state when it exists at one time and not at another? This happens, as stated before, to some persons according to their karma (*prarabdha*) for some time or till death. It cannot properly be regarded as the final state. If it could it would mean that all great souls and the Lord, who were the authors of the Vedantic works (*jnana granthas*) and the Vedas, were unenlightened persons. If the supreme state is that in which neither the senses nor the mind exist and not the state in which they exist, how can it be the perfect state (*paripurnam*)? As karma alone is responsible for the activity or inactivity of the sages, great souls have declared the state of *sahaja nirvikalpa* (the natural state without concepts) alone to be the ultimate state.

7. *What is the difference between ordinary sleep and waking sleep (jagrat sushupti)*?

In ordinary sleep there are not only no thoughts but also no awareness. In waking sleep there is awareness alone. That is why it is called awake while sleeping, that is the sleep in which there is awareness.

8. *Why is the Self described both as the fourth state (turiya) and beyond the fourth state (turiyatita)*?

Turiya means that which is the fourth. The experiencers (*jivas*) of the three states of waking, dreaming

and deep sleep, known as *visva, taijasa* and *prajna*, who wander successively in these three states, are not the Self. It is with the object of making this clear, namely that the Self is that which is different from them and which is the witness of these states, that it is called the fourth (*turiya*). When this is known the three experiencers disappear and the idea that the Self is a witness, that it is the fourth, also disappears. That is why the Self is described as beyond the fourth (*turiyatita*).

9. *What is the benefit derived by the sage from the sacred books (Srutis)*?

The sage who is the embodiment of the truths mentioned in the scriptures has no use for them.

10. *Is there any connection between the attainment of supernatural powers (siddhis) and Liberation (mukti)*?

Enlightened enquiry alone leads to Liberation. Supernatural powers are all illusory appearances created by the power of *maya* (*mayashakti*). Self-realization which is permanent is the only true accomplishment (*siddhi*). Accomplishments which appear and disappear, being the effect of *maya*, cannot be real. They are accomplished with the object of enjoying fame, pleasures, etc. They come unsought to some persons through their karma. Know that union with Brahman is the real aim of all accomplishments. This is also the state of Liberation (*aikya mukti*) known as union (*sayujya*).

11. *If this is the nature of Liberation (moksha) why do some scriptures connect it with the body and say that the individual soul can attain Liberation only when it does not leave the body*?

It is only if bondage is real that Liberation and the nature of its experiences have to be considered. So far as the Self (*Purusha*) is concerned it has really no bondage in any of the four states. As bondage is merely a verbal assumption according to the emphatic proclamation of the Vedanta system, how can the question of Liberation, which depends upon the question of bondage, arise when there is no bondage? Without knowing this truth, to enquire into the nature of bondage and Liberation, is like enquiring into the non-existent height, colour, etc., of a barren woman's son or the horns of a hare.

12. *If that is so, do not the descriptions of bondage and release found in the scriptures become irrelevant and untrue*?

No, they do not. On the contrary, the delusion of bondage fabricated by ignorance from time immemorial can be removed only by knowledge, and for this purpose the term 'Liberation' (*mukti*) has been usually accepted. That is all. The fact that the characteristics of Liberation are described in different ways proves that they are imaginary.

13. *If that is so, are not all efforts such as study (lit. hearing) reflection, etc., useless*?

No, they are not. The firm conviction that there is neither bondage nor liberation is the supreme purpose of all efforts. As this purpose of seeing boldly, through direct experience, that bondage and liberation do not exist, cannot be achieved except with the aid of the aforesaid practices, these efforts are useful.

14. *Is there any authority for saying that there is neither bondage nor Liberation*?

This is decided on the strength of experience and not merely on the strength of the scriptures.

15. *If it is experienced how is it experienced*?

'Bondage' and 'Liberation' are mere linguistic terms. They have no reality of their own. Therefore they cannot function of their own accord. It is necessary to accept the existence of some basic thing of which they are the modifications. If one enquires, 'for whom is there bondage and Liberation?' it will be seen, 'they are for me'. If one enquires, 'who am I?', one will see that there is no such thing as the 'I'. It will then be as clear as an *amalaka* fruit in one's hand that what remains is one's real being. As this truth will be naturally and clearly experienced by those who leave aside mere verbal discussions and enquire into themselves inwardly, there is no doubt that all realized persons uniformly see neither bondage nor Liberation so far as the true Self is concerned.

16. *If truly there is neither bondage nor Liberation what is the reason for the actual experience of joys and sorrows*?

They appear to be real only when one turns aside from one's real nature. They do not really exist.

17. *Is it possible for everyone to know directly without doubt what exactly is one's true nature*?

Undoubtedly it is possible.

18. *How*?

It is the experience of everyone that even in the states of deep sleep, fainting, etc., when the entire universe, moving and stationary, beginning with earth and ending with the unmanifested (*Prakriti*), disappear, he does not disappear. Therefore the state of pure being which is common to all and which is always experienced directly by everybody is one's true nature. The conclusion is that all experiences in the enlightened as well as the ignorant state, which may be described by newer and newer words, are opposed to one's real nature.

May this book consisting of the words of experience, which have come out of the lotus heart of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, shine as a lamp of true knowledge to illuminate the true minds of those who have renounced (the world).

BLESSINGS

May the world be blessed for long with the feet of Guru Ramana who abides as that silent principle which absorbs all of us and remains by itself as the root of the three principles (soul, world and *Iswara*).